

In general

- 842 /184 cont./every girl desires a great
[581] many children, for this is the chief requirement for being married. Moreover, the percentage of barren women -- in childless marriages, [162] they say, the fault is always the woman's -- is not small. According to inquiries, it comes to about 10 per cent. Men generally want boys; the women, girls, in order to have help in the household. Twin births are rare, but they are not regarded as anything special; rather, people are happy about them as they are about other children. Deformities at birth are said not to occur; however, I saw several persons with cleft palates. They seem to be ashamed of this, for in conversations with us they always held
847 their hands over their mouths. Infanticide does not occur. To
123 inquiries about this, there was always the completely horrified counterquestion as to whether that was the case in my country.
165 Overpopulation is not to be feared, even with a larger number
[163] of children -- the average is three to four living children per family -- since infant mortality comes to more than 50 per cent.
[164] Whooping cough is the most frequent cause of death among small children.

a) Birth and Childhood

- 843 The parents' concern for the child begins even before birth. The husband of a pregnant woman expecting her first child must sleep with her very frequently, for otherwise the child would be very weak. In the case of subsequent children this is no longer
[783] required so often after the beginning of pregnancy. The pregnant woman may not leave the house or eat pork for two months before the birth, since this causes "pest" and she would have stomach
[823] pains; this would be very detrimental to the child. For the same reason she may not eat beans and onions, and no fish because it comes from the cold element, water, and because a pregnant woman must not become cold.
843 According to one informant, the pregnant woman retires
343 to the menstruation hut (dúyat) two to three weeks before the
124 birth. During this time her mother or another female relative cooks for the family. According to another informant, the
/185/ woman does not retire to the dúyat until the birth. In any
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/185 cont. / In any

844 case, the birth, which is always regarded as very dangerous, takes
[343] place there. As a matter of principle, a midwife (ndōsoknās) is
[759] fetched. The latter, as the name implies, is not a shaman. She
has nothing to do with shamanistic functions, but is qualified only
for births or external injuries, such as broken bones or flesh wounds.

The midwife may not be an old woman. She is fetched be-
fore the birth by the husband of the pregnant woman and always
comes. Several times I asked whether in an emergency a man
or the mother could help, but it was always said that the midwife
[465] always comes, no matter how busy she is. For her assistance she
receives only her meals, unless complications arise. In this case
she receives wool or natural produce as remuneration for her help.

In principle, only the midwife and the woman in labor are
in the dūyat. The latter is in a squatting position. With her hands
she holds onto a belt that is slung around the roof beam of the
dūyat. If there is no belt, the husband may also be present, and
he then embraces his wife from behind and holds her in such a
way that she is likewise in a squatting position. The midwife
● 845 receives the child. If its position is not normal, for example, in
844 case of a breech position of the child, she turns the child so that
the head lies downward. If the child is still not born, the mother
must die -- as was explained to us -- for then nothing further can
be done. This only rarely happens, however.

844 The midwife brings along her medicinal herbs, with which
she rubs the body of the woman in labor. The newborn child is
first washed with cold water and then wrapped in a piece of ruana
[412] and given to the mother. The severing of the umbilical cord is
[824] not done with the knife or the scissors, but rather, after the umbili-
cal cord (kolwát) is tied beforehand with a homespun wool thread,
with the sharp-edged cane of a type of reed. The father may see
his child immediately after birth; the mother, however, stays
with the child approximately two weeks longer in the dūyat. The
afterbirth (duyáha), together with the umbilical cord, is buried
near the menstruation house. The father digs the hole for this
[856] purpose, and the mother throws both into it. The hole must not
be too shallow, for otherwise the dogs would dig them out, but
not too deep either, for then the child would not get its teeth
until very late and only with great
difficulty.

/255 cont. /

802 designated as "much" (teč kwát), literally "one stone." Today it is the designation for "hundred."

75 The medical knowledge of the Paez is not great. Almost all illnesses are regarded as based on magical causes and are treated by the shamans (see below /see pp. 190 ff. /). Broken bones are treated by the midwife, who rubs on cow fat and wraps leaves around them. The broken bone is never put in splints. In a difficult birth the midwife is able to turn the child into the right position; if then the birth does not go well, her skill is at an end. No remedy is known for snake bite. In the case of headaches, a leaf is tied to the front of the head. For flatulence some wood ashes are rubbed on the abdomen. For injuries caused by a machete and bleeding profusely, a tourniquet is applied to the affected limb, above the place of the injury, and the wound is covered with a small piece of cloth. The shaman has the injured person bite hard with all his teeth on the iron machete.

3. Religion

771 The Paez today are nominally Christians. They are baptized
797 and usually married by the Catholic priest. The Christian mission-
izing began as early as the sixteenth century, at first, to be sure,
with little success, which did not increase when from 1630-1654 Jesuit
missionaries took over the mission work. Only in the last decades
797 has there been greater progress. Hand in hand with the conversion
177 to Christianity go the introduction and teaching of the Spanish lan-
871 guage and the adoption of Colombian customs and habits. Today
in almost every village there is a mission station and a school, the
teachers of which are mostly women missionaries. In general the
parents do not send their children to school unwillingly, for they
have realized that knowledge of Spanish and of reading and writing
is accompanied by certain advantages in their relations with the
[178] whites. In connection with the /256/ schooling, of course, there is
[756] some alienation from the old habits and customs of the Paez, espe-
cially those of a religious and sociological nature. Nevertheless,